



Proactive reservoir management increases public awareness about keeping lakes healthy

Do you know where your drinking water comes from? It comes from Norfolk's source water reservoirs, of course. But that does not mean that the reservoirs are *in* Norfolk. The City's primary source water reservoirs are in the Suffolk and Isle of Wight areas of the state.

In fact, only 8% of Norfolk's source water is in its own jurisdiction. The majority of those who live on and around the other 92% of Norfolk's source water are not Norfolk water customers.

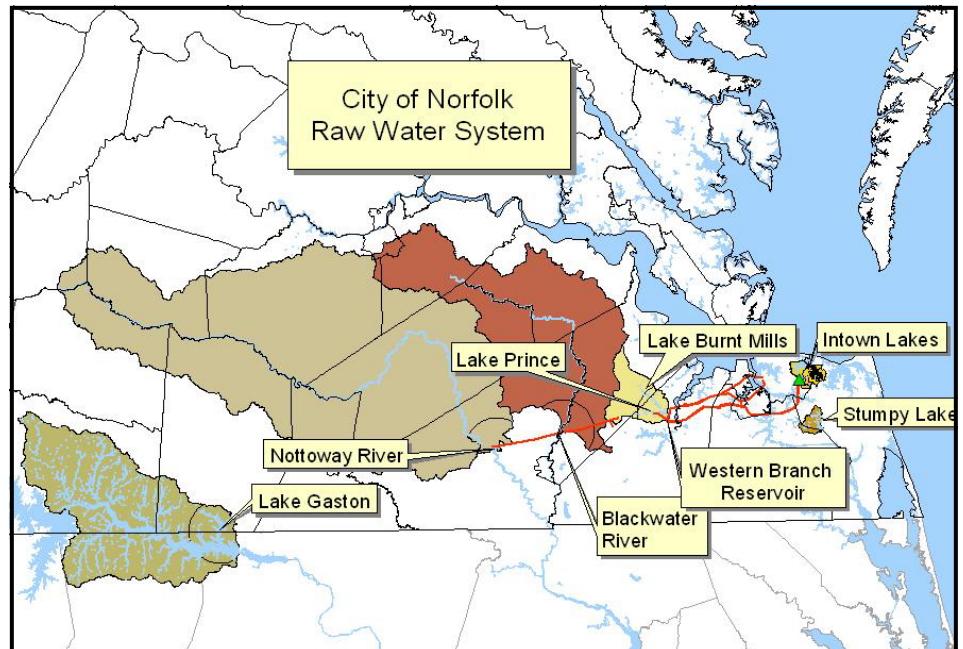
"The bottom line is that the people we are relying on to help us protect the larger part of our water and watershed don't drink the finished, treated water," said Reservoir Manager David Rosenthal.

In 1990, when Rosenthal was hired as Norfolk's first Reservoir Manager, he was tasked with building a program that would educate all residents on the lakes and in the watershed about the effect they can have on the drinking water lakes.

"What people do in their own yards and in their community, whether on the lakefront or several miles away, can affect the lakes," said Rosenthal. "Educating people about that has been our focus for the last 16 years."

At first the Water Resources office, an arm of Norfolk Utilities Division of Water Quality, was more reactive than Rosenthal wanted it to be. Residents and users of the lakes generally were unaware of the rules and ordinances that apply to lake use and didn't know much about the role of the Department of Utilities in relation to managing the lakes.

The Lake Patrol, three Norfolk Police Officers that monitor and ensure safety on the reservoirs and shorelines, initially spent much of their time writing summonses to those



As shown by the map above, the majority of the source for Norfolk's drinking water is in reservoirs outside of the City's jurisdiction.

not in compliance with reservoir boating, fishing, and bulk-head/pier codes. But, they also were able to educate boaters, fishermen, and residents about responsible actions on and around the lakefront. They distributed flyers with reservoir rules and spread the word about the new Water Resources office where people could call with questions.

Over the years, the Utilities Water Resources Office has produced and distributed educational materials, made presentations, formed watershed initiatives and environmental protection groups, organized lake clean-up days, appeared on television, created a detailed and educational website, and interviewed for the newspaper. They have appeared in videos and talked to schools.

The current Water Resources team, Gary Bowen, Gary Butts, and Rosenthal, understand that people in general want to protect the environment. They just need to know the right things to do.

"Our job has been mostly public relations and public education," said Rosenthal. "The lake patrol was the beginning, and we have continued to expand our education program."

Generally, each audience has a different stake in the health of the lakes. Norfolk residents are interested in keeping the lakes healthy to benefit their own drinking water. Anglers care about the proper habitat the lakes provide for the fish. Suffolk and Isle of Wight residents want to ensure the lakes' beauty.

Rosenthal regularly posts notices on the most popular fishing websites and answers questions via internet bulletin boards. The Water Resources staff has done whatever necessary to reach the many audiences that are stakeholders in the health of the

lakes.

It's Utilities' job to educate all of them.

The latest product is **Waterfront News**, a four-page newsletter containing need-to-know information about maintaining the health and beauty of the lakes. In July **Waterfront News** was mailed directly to 1,400 lakefront residents in all jurisdictions. Its articles include:

- "Lakefront Construction and Landscaping,"
- "Removing Fallen and Leaning Trees,"
- "Fishing and Boating,"
- "Fertilizer, Your Lawn and the Lake,"
- "Erosion Control for Shoreline Protection,"
- "Pollution Prevention," and

- "Norfolk Police Protecting Your Investment."

Waterfront News has been well-received by its readers, who have called and e-mailed the Water Resources office, thanking Utilities for providing them with the helpful information.

One of the ways the Water Resources office measures the effectiveness of its education program is by the decreased number of summonses the patrol has to write, attesting to the fact that lake users have the correct information and know the rules to follow.

The increased numbers of citizens' calls and website hits are also important measures of success.

Wes Williamson, Thomas King represent Norfolk in Virginia American Water Works Association Water Distribution Rodeo

Contestants from water utilities across Virginia met in Chesapeake this May for the annual Virginia Section American Water Works Association (AWWA) Water Distribution Rodeo. They competed in assembling water meters, fixing house line leaks, tapping water mains and finding underground utilities lines.

These are all skills water industry field professionals use everyday, but at the rodeo, the events are timed, which makes the tasks even more challenging.

Wes Williamson and Thomas King of Norfolk Utilities' Division of Water Distribution, are seasoned veterans of the AWWA Rodeo. Williamson has competed in the Rapid Tappin' team event and the Splish Splash individual event for more than five years. King has competed in Splish Splash several times before.

This year, both entered Splish Splash, a simulated water repair procedure. Working alone, the contestant must repair a 3/4" copper service line under water pressure.

First-round contestants who complete the repair in fewer than 45 seconds advance to the final round. Leaks in the line take time from the score, and the fastest time wins.

Ranking sixth among the 18 contestants, Williamson times in a 37.66 seconds. King was clocked at 58.59.

Splish Splash reflects what our water distribution crews do in the field, but both Williamson and King agree that the work in the field is much harder than the competition. It's tough in the field, because the copper is weathered and it doesn't bend as easily as the new copper used in the rodeo.

In the field, the crews also have to dig through streets or ground to expose the pipe.

Not only is it harder in the field, it's dangerous, too. Digging underground means they have to be careful of other utility lines, like gas and electricity. That means that the actual repair of a line can't be done in the few seconds it takes in competition. ♦



Wes Williamson (above) and Thomas King with Williamson watching closely (below) battle the clock in the Virginia Section AWWA Water Distribution Rodeo Splish Splash competition.

